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Reflecting on the Work of PBI

In this special issue of our News Bulletin, we share stories of PBI and the human rights defenders we have supported both in honor of our 35+ years of providing non-violent protective accompaniment and in anticipation of our new global strategic plan, which begins in 2018. Through reflections, we explore the evolution of this unique organization, which through the years has grown from a collective of volunteers primarily in North America to a global multi-entity organization with projects and country groups around the world. Reflections included represent volunteers from the U.S. who not only helped form the U.S. country group, PBI-USA, but were also part of the founding of PBI itself. We also share in this issue updates from PBI's work in 2016, preparations for our new global strategic plan adopted in October 2017, and a look at the ongoing challenges faced by defenders working in increasingly violent contexts.

The reflections begin with Dan Clark, who was one of the handful of people in 1981 who helped form Peace Brigades International. Dan volunteered to serve as the first General Secretary. During the first few years, the international headquarters for PBI was at Dan's house in Walla Walla, Washington, from which a team of volunteers ran and grew the organization. From the dedicated work of just a few, an international movement for protective accompaniment was born. Read Dan's reflections below and those of other volunteers and staff from PBI and PBI-USA's early years, which follow on page 10.

A Conversation with Dan Clark

Eleven of us gathered on Grindstone Island from August 31-September 4, 1981, and decided to form PBI. Three of us took on organizational roles. Charley Walker, who had a full-time job with the Friends (Quaker) Suburban Project in the Philadelphia area, was the Coordinator; Ray McGee, a UCC minister with California-based Peaceworkers organization whose main goal was to get the UN to offer or sponsor unarmed peacekeepers as part of its own services, agreed to serve as provisional Treasurer. I said I could spend a year full-time on the initial organizing, and offered to move to New York with my family, which would have been a hardship since we're way out in the other Washington. Others, particularly George Willoughby when he heard this, said that wouldn't be nearly long enough, so instead I agreed to serve as the first General Secretary of PBI with the international headquarters in my home law office in Walla Walla.

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About PBI-USA

Peace Brigades International-USA

PBI was founded in 1981 with the mandate to create space for peace and protect human rights. PBI has a horizontal, international structure with an international office in London, international committees, seven field projects, and over a dozen country groups, including PBI-USA. The work of PBI-USA is made possible through the efforts of a small staff and a host of dedicated interns and volunteers, including PBI-USA's Human Rights Lawyers' Collective and PBI-USA's Board of Directors (called our National Coordinating Committee or NCC).

Staff and Interns:

Amelia Parker,

Executive Director

Pat Davis,

Advocacy Coordinator

Dr. Alexander Parks,

Administrative Intern

National Coordinating Committee (NCC):

Faith Garlington

San Jose, CA

Andrew Miller

Washington, DC

Dr. Janet Powers

Gettysburg, PA

Dr. Matt Messier

Burlington, VE

Emily Nelson

Olympia, WA

Human Rights Lawyers' Collective:

Deena Hurwitz, Dir., Atrocity Prevention Legal Training Project, Holocaust & Human Rights Institute, Cardozo School of Law

Sital Kalantry, Clinical Prof. of Law, Cornell Univ. Law School

Angie McCarthy, Office of Public Interest, American University Washington College of Law

Jennifer Moore, Prof. of Law, Univ. of New Mexico School of Law

Emily Nelson, Office of the Attorney General, Olympia, WA

Margaret Satterthwaite, Prof. of Clinical Law, NYU School of Law

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Return the included envelope with a check or your credit card information to the address below; or

Go to **www.pbiousa.org** and click on the **Donate Now** button or;

Call us and make a credit card donation by phone (202-232-0142).

PBI-USA
P.O. Box 75880
Washington, DC 20013

Thank you for standing with us alongside human rights defenders at risk.



PBI-USA

2016 was a challenging year for human rights defenders and thus a busy year for PBI. From the death of Berta Cáceres, the need to expand our team in Honduras and schedule urgent advocacy speaking tours, to the work of the Lawyers' Committee (now Collective) in support of defenders seeking legal remedies for the disappeared, PBI-USA remained active throughout the year. We also invested time and resources in firming up our structure to prepare for human rights challenges to come. As a result of our hard work, we began 2017 in a strong financial position, allowing us to implement new tools to better support human rights defenders, including hiring a DC-based advocacy coordinator, Pat Davis (pictured right), who joined our team in May 2017. Pat is a writer and human rights activist who formerly served as director of the Guatemala Human Rights Commission. More recently, she has turned to dramatic writing for advocacy, producing multiple works for audiences around the country. We are thrilled to welcome Pat to the PBI-USA team!



As we approach the end of the year, PBI entities are wrapping up a global process to finalize a new strategic plan adopted at our General Assembly in October 2017. Over the past six years, we have worked to bring more attention to the attacks occurring against particularly vulnerable defenders such as those working to protect land and environmental rights. We've researched, debated, and explored ways to improve our communications tools leading to a new website design. We hope the web upgrades will inspire more people to learn about the work of PBI, the defenders we support, and get involved in the movement for peace and justice.

Below we outline our work in 2016 and begin the conversation of what is possible for the years ahead.



Nat'l Coordinating Cmte (NCC) Updates

In 2016, PBI-USA said farewell to long-time NCC member Alex Hildebrand (left) after Emily Nelson, former field volunteer in Colombia pictured front left in the photo above, joined the NCC last year. We thank Alex for his tireless service to PBI! The NCC is still recruiting new members. Prior experience with PBI is not required. If you are interested in joining the NCC, give us a call or send an email to amelia@pbiousa.org.

PBI-USA Lawyers' Collective Updates

The PBI-USA Lawyers' Committee, created in 2010, has recently gone through a transformation, moving from a committee structure to a collective to give the group more flexibility. Over the past year, members of the collective have continued to support (W)HRDs who



are working in Mexico on the issue of disappearances. In 2015 and 2016, the Boston University School of Law and American University Washington College of Law human rights clinics, in partnership with PBI, travelled to northern Mexico on fact-finding missions in hopes of supporting the efforts of human rights defenders in bringing a complaint before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights on the issue of disappearances in northern Mexico. After the Commission announced a financial crisis, PBI worked with our partners in the U.S. and in Mexico to organize a workshop in Washington, DC for Mexican defenders to assess potential legal strategies and for U.S.-based groups providing support/working in solidarity to learn how they can best support in light of the financial challenges at the Commission. Above, we share a group photo taken after the workshop. On November 3, 2017, a continuing strategy discussion was held at Boston University. With ongoing financial challenges facing the Inter-American system, the work of the Commission has been slow to move forward and therefore (W)HRDs continue to search for relief from other legal bodies.

While more attention, though insufficient, has gone to disappearances in Mexico, little to no attention has been given to the complex issue of migrant disappearances. It is estimated that 120,000 migrants have disappeared in Mexico in the last 10 years although there is little data regarding this issue. BU, with PBI's support, is working to investigate the relationship between enforced disappearances and forced migration movements in Mexico, as well as the relationship between the laws intended to protect migrants, the gaps in laws requiring investigation, as well as the actual prosecutions of responsible actors. The BU team is hoping to shed light on the legal strategies that are available to the families of the disappeared in order to compose a proper report documenting the issues and provide recommendations to better address the problem. The team also aims to pursue legal strategies to take on the demands of the victims and their families.

Preparation for New Global Strategic Plan

PBI's newest global strategic plan, adopted at our General Assembly (GA) in October 2017, spans the years of 2018–2023. Some big decisions were made at the gathering including the decision to move PBI's international office from London to Brussels in 2018 and recruiting an administrator and finance manager for the office. Leading up to the GA, PBI staff and volunteers participated in visioning meetings and workshops to explore the factors impacting our work and the work of (W)HRDs who continue to experience attacks, violence, and criminalization at growing rates. Some evolving threats include: climate change leading to conflict over shrinking resources; huge migratory movements, met with racism and xenophobia, resulting in mass human rights violations; growing urbanization and housing insecurity; and Trump's election and the weakening of democratic multilateralism. Recognizing the ongoing need for PBI, we are working to grow into a stronger, more diverse global organization while also recognizing our on-going and long-term commitments. This is an exciting time to join PBI-USA's NCC. Email amelia@pbiousa.org to learn more.

Advocacy Speaking Tours

Following the murder of land and environmental rights' defender Berta Cáceres, PBI-USA supported two delegations of human rights defenders from Honduras to the U.S. In April 2016, members of Arcoiris, an LGBTQ+ advocacy group, travelled to Washington, DC with PBI's support to participate in the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights Sessions and participate in a Congressional Briefing (pictured right) on the U.S. policy response to violence in Honduras. Honduran group CEHPRODEC also made its first advocacy visit to the U.S. in 2016, meeting with members of the international community and Congress as well as following up on precautionary measures granted by the Inter-American Commission. Following the visits, PBI joined with other international organizations in calling on the U.S. to stop military aid to the country.



In October 2016, PBI accompanied Isidoro Vicario Aguilar, lawyer of the Human Rights Center Tlachinollan in Guerrero, during a visit to Washington, DC.

Isidoro Vicario met with staff from the U.S. Senate and Congress, State Department the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), the Special Rapporteur on Torture, and numerous human rights organizations. Isidoro Vicario outlined the context of violence in the state of Guerrero, where on October 4, 2016, six people were murdered, including two students from the 'Normal Raúl Isidro Burgos' of Ayotzinapa. Additionally, the lawyer emphasized the risk for human rights defenders working in Guerrero and special attention was given to the Ayotzinapa case.



In November 2016, PBI hosted two defenders, Willian and Nhora, from the Puente Nayero Humanitarian Space in Buenaventura, Colombia in Knoxville, Tennessee and Washington, DC for several days while both were participating in the FOR Peace Presence Bridging the Americas speaking tour. Both PBI and FOR Peace Presence provide protective accompaniment support to the humanitarian space. During their visit, we organized an exchange with 15 African American organizers based in the U.S. South at the Highlander Research and Education Center (pictured right), leading to very powerful discussions of race, identity, and self-determination.

The next round of U.S. advocacy tours by PBI-accompanied human rights defenders will take place in spring 2018. Details will be shared ahead of the visits on our website and through our e-newsletter.





PBI Honduras

Over the past year, PBI has expanded our work considerably in Honduras, accompanying new organizations and individuals dedicated to defending a wide range of rights. Eight years after the coup, Honduras still suffers from levels of violence that rank Honduran cities among the most dangerous in the world. After over two years of continuous presence in the country, PBI continues to observe patterns that perpetuate impunity and violence.

On June 8, 2017, three students were convicted of 'felony of usurpation' for taking part in student protests on campus. National and international organizations as well as the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Honduras have expressed a deep concern in regards to the criminalization of protests and the comments made by the university regarding the convictions. PBI is well aware of the issue and has been involved in various aspects of the case such as observing protests.

Dina Meza, a human rights defender accompanied by PBI, has also received various threats and accusations for her work as a journalist who publicized the event. Dina has been working with the lawyer of the three students to expose the mass human rights violations occurring within the country and surrounding the case of the three students. Honduran civil society and various international organizations are calling upon the Honduran government to consider the various proposals for Penal Code Reform from civil society, particularly for felonies such as usurpation, terrorism, and extortion.

Environmental defenders in Honduras continue to face daily risks to their lives as well, a fact made clear by the spring 2016 murders of COPINH leaders Berta Cáceres and Nelson Noé García, as well as the October 2016 murders of José Ángel Flores, president of the MUCA, and of community leader Silmer Dionisio George, along with numerous other attempted murders of human rights defenders more recently. In November 2017, a team of independent lawyers selected by the daughter of Berta Cáceres released a report revealing evidence connecting Berta's murder and cover-up to high-ranking officials of the energy company, Desarrollos Energéticos, known as Desa, that Berta and her community were protesting before she was killed as well as state agents and criminal gangs. Although 8 people have been arrested in connection with the murder, concerns remain that those who ordered Berta's murder will escape prosecution.

The LGBTQ+ community in Honduras continues to be disproportionately impacted by the violence. In 2016, PBI issued an alert to raise awareness regarding the alarming number of assassinations committed against the LGBT community. However, progress has been slow and the killings continue. In response, PBI has worked to strengthen our accompaniment of organizations like Arcoíris, which aims to empower and inform the community of Tegucigalpa and Comoyaguela on matters of health and human rights. In April 2017, a leading member in Arcoíris Muñeca group, Sherlyn Montoya, was found dead with signs of torture after having disappeared earlier that week. Although the community denounced the murder and asked authorities for an investigation, the case has yet to be solved.

Another recent focal point of our work has been the Consultation Law of Honduras, which grants the government authority over indigenous land, and is quickly being incorporated into communities without the approval of community members. Recently, PBI-accompanied group CEHPRODEC, set up various initiatives to increase consultations with poverty-stricken communities. In April 2017, CEHPRODEC and PBI accompanied the indigenous community of Minas de Oro as they were consulted over mining projects that would affect their livelihood and land. More than 90% of the people voted no.



In April 2016, lawyers from CEHPRODEC, accompanied by field volunteer Lena Weber (pictured above), made their first advocacy visit to the U.S. to bring attention to the situation they face in Honduras. Between 2012 and March 2014, around 111 environmental and land rights defenders were murdered in Honduras, while many more suffered physical attacks and systematic persecution. During their visit, we interviewed Donald Hernandez (pictured left) and below are some of his reflections. The full interview can be found on the PBI-USA website.

"For human rights defenders and principally for defenders of territory, Honduras is currently in a very complicated moment. Global Witness, an organization that

specializes in environmental issues, has concluded that Honduras is one of the most dangerous countries for land and territory defenders. We can confirm that. Things have also gotten complicated for economic, social, and cultural rights defenders because we struggle against the interests of corporations and politicians who have gotten recent governments to hand over concessions for mining, hydroelectric dams, or monoculture projects that are forcing rural families to move to the cities or, even worse, provoking high levels of migration to the United States or Europe. This has us very concerned because combined with high levels of criminality and our geographic location, it has catalyzed Honduras being the place where multiple organized gangs are fighting for territorial control of the drug routes. And it is us who have to offer those who are killed, who have to offer up those who are criminalized. So we are bringing our voice out to the world so a focus is put on Honduras, obligating our government to respect human life and to respect civil society organizations. They should offer us the needed space in order to participate in transparent processes. Our voices should count in terms of the possible 'development' that comes to our lands." – Donald Hernandez



PBI Guatemala

The risks for (women) human rights defenders (WHRDs) in 2016 remained high in Guatemala and continue in 2017. The largest number of attacks reported are related to the criminalization of civil protest and smear campaigns against defenders. For example, in August 2017, Guatemalan President Jimmy Morales declared the head of the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala, Iván Velásquez, persona non grata following a request to the court to remove the President's immunity in an investigation into corruption. Several embassies and national and international organizations have expressed their concerns about President Morales's action.

Women human rights defenders have suffered the largest share of the attacks, 27%, particularly those protecting the environment and natural resources, such as land and water. In March 2016, Pedro Tzicá, Guatemalan indigenous leader

(pictured), visited multiple countries in Europe as part of an advocacy tour organized by PBI. Pedro is an indigenous Maya K'iche' leader of the Cunén Community Council (CCC), a community organization for the defense of the land, natural resources, and human rights. In the area of Cunén and northern Quiché, there are many social conflicts around hydroelectric projects, mining, and high-voltage electricity pylons. In 2010, PBI began accompanying CCC due to the security risks faced by WHRDs actively promoting the right to land, territory, and natural resources in the region. During the advocacy tour, Pedro met with various NGOs including the Guatemala Solidarity Network, who recorded an interview with Pedro, shared in part below. In July 2017, PBI increased our contact with CCC members.

"I have come here in the name of the communities of Cunén ... well, it can also be said that I come from the department of Quiché in Guatemala to denounce publicly all of the human rights violations that the Guatemalan state has committed against indigenous peoples in Guatemala... All that I ask from the national and international community is that information is disclosed so that everything that is happening does not stay in silence, but that it is published. Because businesses and governments do their best to present reports that they are bringing good development to our country. But in reality it is not development but the appearance of development. They have to repress, they have to kill people to create their development. This is the development of capitalism. This is not human development. So for this reason, we are coming to denounce it and put information out publicly in order that people know." – Pedro Tzica

Along with CCC, PBI also accompanies the organization K'iche Peoples Council (CPK), which works to fight the illegal cutting of trees in the surrounding areas of Santa Cruz, an area that belongs to the indigenous K'iche' people. Recently, members of CPK have been subject to violent, sexual threats. 35% of the attacks against WHRDs reported in Guatemala are directed at women who face smear campaigns, intimidation, and direct personal attacks. In June 2017, CPK members detained a truck carrying illegal wood. Members, mostly women and children, were quickly threatened and attacked forcing them to run and seek refuge, demonstrating the security risks that the members of CPK face on behalf of their commitment to protecting the forests. PBI has accompanied CPK, off and on, since 2013.

PBI has also witnessed an increasing amount of violence, acts of aggression, and threats against the ch'orti community broadly, and the group Central Campesina Ch'orti' Nuevo Día (CCCND) specifically. CCCND provides legal support and representation to the ch'orti' communities who are opposing the construction of hydroelectric projects on their lands. In 2017, leaders have been held captive, threatened, offered bribes, and slandered. Attackers aim to create fear in the community so as to stop them from opposing the projects and mines being constructed. However, the brave men, women, and children continue forward and PBI remains there alongside the ch'orti' communities, as our team has been since 2009.



NepalMonitor.org

NepalMonitor, a conflict prevention initiative supported by PBI, continues to expand its reach and use throughout Nepal. Daily reports related to human rights and security incidents are being uploaded to and mapped on NepalMonitor that can be used for longterm trend analysis on violence in Nepal, and soon more broadly throughout Asia. NepalMonitor.org in cooperation with The Asia Foundation has started a Peace Monitoring Pilot that expands the sources used for reporting incidents to include the police website and district-level newspapers for 10 sample districts initially. In 2016, 3086 reports were mapped – of those, 459 related to general human rights, 1867 related to security, 982 to gender-based violence, and 37 to

threats to defenders. Over the same period, NepalMonitor's subscriber base grew steadily from around 900 to more than 2200 over the course of the year, mostly due to increased outreach with human rights defenders outside Kathmandu. Pictured above, PBI staff member Neil Horning at a Train-the-Trainers training in December 2016. The objective is to provide participants with hands-on preparation to use NepalMonitor's peace building project and its advocacy in different regions. Following the training, participants will provide an introductory session on NepalMonitor to human rights defenders from two districts in their region.



PBI Colombia

In 1993, U.S. volunteer Janey Skinner participated in the PBI exploratory mission to Colombia that led to PBI's international council establishing the Colombia project in 1995. Continuing with the reflections shared throughout this publication, we share below Janey's memories from her time in Colombia.

"One day in Barrancabermeja, we were walking through the city with two members of Credhos (a group accompanied by PBI which was one of the handful of groups that first extended the invitation for PBI to come to Colombia). While we were walking, the two people were telling us of some of the horrors

that had occurred.

'Last year on that corner a doctor was killed.... In that store three young people were harassed.... In May, two mutilated cadavers were found in this park....'

When we arrived at the restaurant one of the Credhos members smiled saying that they had enjoyed walking with us because for more than a year they had been afraid to walk around in the city and had always gone everywhere by taxi and in fear. We realized the powerful impact a foreign presence could have, even in small matters: We had enabled these people to walk down a main street of Barrancabermeja at midday and feel comfortable.

There were many small indications like this one that illustrated what everyone had been telling us: That international humanitarian presence can help keep open a political space for which many people are struggling and even giving their lives."

Today, PBI continues to accompany Credhos and in fact, recently celebrated the release of Credhos founder, David Ravelo, from prison in June 2017 after seven years of wrongful imprisonment. David was accused of aggravated homicide in 2010 based on the testimony of incarcerated paramilitaries, leading to his conviction and sentencing of 18 years in prison. David was a prominent Colombian human rights defender. Not only did he found Credhos (the Regional Corporation for the Defense of Human Rights) but he also made sure to continue his vast amount of human rights work while he was in prison. PBI accompanied him before and throughout his jail sentence. Since he was detained, both national and international entities have worked to show that there was a lack of compliance with both national and international standards of judicial guaranties and due process. With his release in late June, David, who has been granted precautionary measures of protection by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, continues to be at risk. Many have told him that he should leave and go somewhere else because he could be killed, but David is committed to the noble cause of human rights and insists, just as he did in the past, on staying in Barrancabermeja. Therefore, PBI will continue to provide support and protection for him and members of his legal team.

Throughout the past year, PBI Colombia redoubled its efforts to respond to a changing and demanding context, shaped by the final months of peace negotiations in Havana between the Colombian government and the FARC. Since the historic signing of the peace agreement in November 2016, Colombia has entered a trying period as it begins the process of implementation. Violence against (women) human rights defenders and social leaders has increased to levels not seen for the last ten years. A positive development is the agreement reached in September 2017 between the Colombian government and the ELN rebels to a bilateral ceasefire that began at



the beginning of October 2017, inspired by a then-pending visit by the Pope. It is interesting to note that the ELN was originally formed by a group of radical Catholic priests in 1964. The ELN released a statement in early November 2017 stating that violence in Chocó was threatening that deal, however.

Although progress has been made with the FARC, and more recently the ELN, violence is far from over in Colombia as new armed groups are forming and taking up space no longer occupied, also speaking to the need for civil society to have the capacity to fill those spaces. Recently, we have focused much attention on the port city of Buenaventura. Buenaventura has witnessed continuous public protests (pictured left) in 2017 that are being violently repressed by the Anti-Disturbance Squadron (ESMAD), the police, and the army. The protests are a result of the large inequality, violence, racial oppression, and poverty that exists within the port town. Geographically, Buenaventura is a key port between Colombia and the rest of the Americas. While development projects increase in number, the living conditions in Buenaventura have deteriorated. PBI will continue to accompany the residents of Buenaventura as well as the organizations Inter Church Justice and Peace Commission (CIJP) and The Association for Social Research and Action (Nomadesc) whose leaders, despite threats and stigmatization, have continued to fight and apply pressure on a national level.



Toolkit for WHRDs in Nairobi's Urban Settlements

PBI Kenya

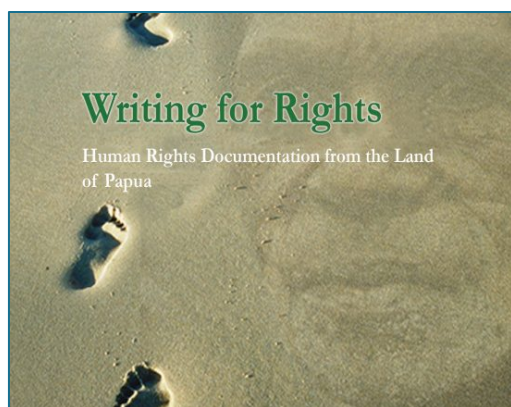


Both Kenyan human rights defenders and civilians face numerous challenges and threats every day, particularly those who live and/or work with impoverished communities in the urban settlements or rural areas. More and more (women) human rights defenders ((W)HRDs) are being arrested and national and international human rights organizations are struggling to obtain work permits. While peaceful protests occur in Kenya, they are often accompanied by mass arrests. Under the new government, the situation has worsened. Groups like the Mathare Social Justice Center have not received public recognition by the government but instead have been victims of increased criminalization. PBI Kenya monitors the security situation and accompanies members of the Mathare Social Justice Center in Nairobi to police stations so that they will be taken seriously, both by national and international entities, because as Gachihi explains: "The bigger the visibility, the better in order to avoid the chance of more arbitrary persecutions."

In 2016, human rights defender Gacheke Gachihi (pictured top right), coordinator of Mathare Social Justice Center spoke with PBI about the increasing criminalization of activists in his home country.

"Since the election of the new President Uhuru Kenyatta in 2013, democracy has suffered severe setbacks in Kenya," Gacheke Gachihi said in an interview with PBI. "Our biggest challenge is the restriction of freedom," emphasizes Gachihi. Gachihi and other activists were arrested arbitrarily and tortured when it became public that they intended to file a petition against the new security law. The authorities have repeatedly used the new law to arrest activists in the name of fighting terrorism. The result has been extrajudicial executions by government security forces that are very rarely brought to justice. On August 11, 2017, President Kenyatta was declared the winner of his reelection campaign; however, the Kenyan Supreme Court annulled the August 8th election results and ordered a new election to take place on October 17, 2017, which was subsequently changed to October 26th. Kenyatta emerged from the second election with an overwhelming majority of votes; however, not only were the results contested but the legitimacy of the election itself was called into question by Kenyatta's opposition, former Prime Minister Raila Odinga, who protested the election. Since October 26th, multiple petitions have been filed at the Supreme Court seeking to overturn Kenyatta's second win, claiming the election was not fair and was marred by violence and intimidation.

On top of the challenges and risks that the work of a human rights defender brings in Kenya, women human rights defenders face a particularly high risk. Women are subject to the additional risk of gender-based violence, such as rape and genital mutilation, topics that have come up through the design of a new toolkit provided by PBI Kenya that contains information and relevant tools to improve the security of WHRDs in Kenya. PBI holds workshops as well as provides capacity-building tools in hopes that the project will be able to sustain itself without PBI later down the road. At the beginning of 2017, PBI selected 15 women human rights defenders to organize and present the toolkit, demonstrating to local residents how the toolkit can be interpreted and applied in their every day lives. The toolkit for WHRDs is accessible through PBI-USA's website as well as personal stories from the WHRDs involved in the project such as Editar Ochieng (pictured above left), who is a Toolkit Organizer based in the Kibera community of Nairobi, Kenya. Kibera is one of the largest urban settlements in the world with around 1.2 million residents in a little over a 1.5 square mile area. As Editar states: "Growing up in Kibera was both a privilege and a struggle. Life is difficult here but this place makes a woman strong and I believe that I am strong today because I grew up in Kibera." Continue reading by visiting pbiusa.org.



PBI Indonesia

In 2016 PBI Indonesia continued to work in partnership with ELSAM (Institute for Policy Research and Advocacy) to train two additional cohorts of human rights defenders, resulting in 29 defenders trained by yearend. The intensive, 4-month training covers a wide range of skills focused on improving the safety of defenders and their effectiveness in carrying out human rights research and advocacy in rural areas. This includes theoretical and practical training in security and protection methods, human rights law, field investigation techniques and advocacy skills. One immediate product of the training has been the development of the book *Writing for Rights: Human Rights Documentation from the Land of Papua*, which is an English translation of a research compilation developed by six participants in the training. The compilation examines daily issues faced by Papuans through a human rights lens. Topics covered include the expansion of palm oil, market access for indigenous women, criminalization of protest, and related issues with case studies from Sorong, Merauke, and Jayapura. The link to download the book is available on PBI-USA's website. In 2017, PBI Indonesia has worked to expand participation from at-risk defenders from more regions in both Eastern and Western Indonesia, particularly those working on land and natural resource conflicts.



You do not disappear because you are a bad person, but because in such a state of crisis as the one we live in, anyone can be “disappeared.” And so we go on ... little by little ... gaining some awareness and solidarity.

– Blanca Martinez

PBI Mexico

On November 9, 2016, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights filed a petition before the Inter-American Court against the state of Mexico for enforced disappearances carried out by state agents. The State's answer was submitted on November 2, 2017. The case represents the first brought against the country in the context of organized crime and drug trafficking. Through the petition, the Commission recommends that Mexico adopt measures to respond to the problem of forced disappearance in Mexico and its particular occurrence in the state of Chihuahua, including measures to strengthen the capacity to investigate cases of forced disappearance of persons and to address structural factors that can lead to impunity in these cases. The petition calls on Mexico to ensure that military criminal justice authorities refrain from obstructing investigations in cases of forced disappearance. According to Insight Crime, the case against Mexico could pressure the government to rethink its strategy of using military forces to fight organized crime in its “war on drugs,” a strategy in place since 2006 and continued under current President Nieto which has resulted in grave human rights abuses including a rise in disappearances. Below, we share part of an interview PBI conducted with Blanca Martinez, director of the Fray Juan de Larios Diocesan Center for Human Rights of Saltillo, Coahuila, one of the key organizations involved in advocating for relief for the families of the disappeared in northern Mexico. Attorney Michael Chamberlain with Fray Juan was the principle organizer of the joint strategy workshops held in Washington, DC and Boston, MA in 2016 and 2017 discussed above in the Lawyers' Collective section.

Fray Juan de Larios and United Forces for Our Disappeared in Coahuila (FUUNDEC)

Interview with Blanca Martinez, director of Fray Juan de Larios Diocesan Center for Human Rights

The Center Fray Juan de Larios was formed in 2001 due to the initiative of Bishop Raul Vera Lopez. It began as a platform to educate, to help build awareness and advise citizens about their rights. We work to fight kidnappings and violations of rights suffered by migrants, in coordination with the Saltillo Migrant Shelter. We also support our colleagues in the Migrant Shelter and in the Gerardi Human Rights Centre, who have been the subject of constant attacks here in Coahuila. We work as well in educating human rights defenders and promoters of peace building because we want to build a culture based on human rights, so that we can live free of violence.

Our work is focused on accompanying victims of violence, especially those who have suffered enforced and involuntary disappearances. We began to document this issue in 2009. The families of the disappeared began to organize, as a group, in December 2009, as the United Forces for Our Disappeared in Coahuila (FUUNDEC). Since that time we have accompanied them. One very important commitment that FUUNDEC has made is to look for all the missing, including those who are in our organization and those that are not. Our aims have to be for everyone, not just for “my” disappeared. As a human rights center, we have registered more than 300 cases but not all have been pursued by FUUNDEC. Some people do not want to organize. Some are very afraid and do not want to press charges. Some just want us to know, but not act. We even have cases of federal police and a state police officer that have gone missing.

Working on enforced disappearances

Enforced disappearance has historically been used by those in power as a source of social control, just like executions. You have to frighten and control the population to impose your interests. This is the case with the massive enforced disappearances we are experiencing in Mexico, with the government reporting about 27,000 cases.

In Mexico the institutions are deteriorating, and the crisis creates such conditions that we find ourselves in an undeniable state of ungovernability. As power vacuums emerge, new players appear who use force, both formal and informal, to occupy the spaces of political power. In this power vacuum, organized crime comes to dispute the control of the territory, the population, the means of production and the money flow.

I had already had contact with relatives of the disappeared in the 70s and 80s, during the dirty war. The disappearances have continued in Mexico since that time. In Chiapas I worked with relatives of executed, displaced or missing persons as a result of the armed conflict. In Saltillo I encountered a new phenomenon of enforced disappearance, one of a more complex nature: the organized crime. These disappearances imply a state responsibility, at least by omission, by permissiveness, because the state has failed in its responsibility to ensure basic rights.

It hurts when I hear the testimonies. There are times that I feel overwhelmed, very sad, powerless, because it is a very serious, very complex issue and beyond our capacity, but in this context my experience, my energy, has become a resource for these families. Our work against enforced disappearance entails risk in the same proportion to the risk faced by the families, no more, no less. We know that from the moment we begin to look for them. The risk conditions for the families and for us will change, depending on what we find as we find them. The story will tell itself.

What the families are asking for

The families and us have two differentiated claims: search and investigations. Until now, the way the authorities have been investigating has not resulted in finding the missing persons. The investigation process aims to find those responsible for the crimes. In some cases, there are detainees, but nobody has confessed. It's obvious. If you are arrested and accused of a crime and they can process you, you're not going to confess anything.

But we say that justice can't be understood without the search, rescue, and location of the missing ones. The search should lead us to know where they are, who took them, why they were taken, how they were taken, what they did with them, what they are still doing with them, and what we can do to rescue them. And investigation involves punishment for those responsible for these crimes. The families of victims of disappearance need to know the truth and to know that these crimes will be punished and will not happen again. (Pictured right, center, Attorney Michael Chamberlain with the Center Fray Juan de Larios leads discussion during Nov. 2016 workshop on legal remedies for the disappeared and families of the disappeared in Mexico).



Progress and challenges in working with Mexican authorities

With the authorities we have made some progress, and we are agreeing on basics. One of the impacts we have made is to come to an agreement, both at the federal and state level, to develop a search procedure. Of course, for the families this is not a breakthrough. The families talk about progress and tangible results when there is some evidence or a loved one has been found, and for them, until that point nothing is progress. Part of our work together with the families is to build a political and humanitarian agenda and to demand its compliance.

We face many challenges. The state does not accept its level of responsibility by stating that these crimes were committed by non-state entities. Most authorities follow the assumption that the persons who are missing either left voluntarily, or had some responsibility for an illegal action or are gone as a result of paybacks. Thus civil society is responsible for the security crisis. These attitudes reflect the state of this crisis. For the authorities it is also difficult to accept our hypothesis that it is likely that some of the missing persons were taken for forced labor. They have not wanted to follow this line of investigation. They tell us: you have to prove that there are specific actions taken by organized crime aimed to compel persons into forced labor, as if it was our responsibility to investigate.

The human factor, strengths and challenges

A valuable asset is the energy of all these women; most of those seeking their relatives are women. It is a force that allows us to breathe and grab courage and to seek possibilities of hope. Most are mothers and wives, sisters and also some brothers and fathers. And right now the children. The children! The daughters and sons are joining the search, taking their space to understand what happened. The families are getting strength from this search, to the extent that they join the group, go to meetings with the group and dare to speak. We start to see signs of the strengthening process in them. At the same time they all have health problems, depression and others. Their bodies react to the trauma, but the years go by and this trauma is not resolved. The solution here is to know where their missing loved ones are. When they fail to find them, they develop new diseases such as strokes, tumors. They also have fear, but even more than fear, they have lots of anger and pain, that allows them to balance out their fear.

Socially, the families are stigmatized. There is always a question about why their missing relatives were taken away and this tends to isolate them. Most of their relatives and neighbors cut them off due to fear or suspicion. To change this, we are working to increase the visibility of this issue. This has allowed us to gradually come into contact with certain sectors of society and give our own interpretation of the problem of disappearances.

Being a human rights defender

Over many years, I have learned to cope with the authorities, to stand and watch them from the front and to not let them intimidate me. For me, being a human rights defender implies a life choice. It has to do with a commitment to transform the situation of injustice in our country and in the world. It is a political commitment to support an ethical approach to human rights; to me the basic foundation of truly democratic states. Human rights work involves facing the system of oppression and injustice that we have and to walk with people whose rights are being systemically violated. We, human right defenders do not experience more risks than the population with whom we work. When working with victims of violence we put ourselves in their position of vulnerability. This risk that we share with the people is linked to the kind of support we offer.

Dan Clark interview continued from cover...

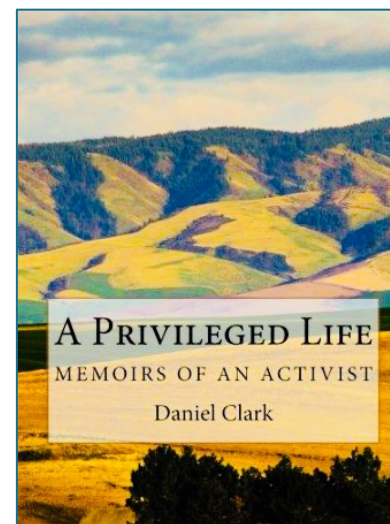
So, the international office was here at first, from which we put out a PBI newsletter, began recruiting additional members of the International Council, and exploring our first project in Central America.

I felt like somewhat of a lone wolf out here. I was the PBI Secretary as well as chair and organizer of the Central America Project, our first active Project, and was doing most of the communicating and paperwork. Nancy Ball, who was the clerk of Walla Walla Friends Meeting and a friend of mine, had become the treasurer after Ray stepped down. So I finally said to everyone that we needed to move the international office to a large urban area. This was in December of 1983. We had a PBI General Meeting in Mexico City, and I had recruited George Willoughby who seemed like the natural choice to take over as Secretary at that point. So in January 1983, we moved the international office to Philadelphia, where George became the new International Secretary and chair of the Central America Project Committee.

The international office remained in Philadelphia until 1992, when it moved to London. Around 1989, I was visiting the office when a call came in from Sri Lanka that lawyers there were being disappeared after they petitioned for habeas corpus writs for people who had also been disappeared. That was the beginning of the Sri Lanka Project.

During the time of the office in Walla Walla, I organized the Central America Project Committee, which met in Philadelphia for the first time, face-to-face, in November 1982, after I led the second PBI exploratory team to Central America, where we visited several countries to see where we might establish a project. Subsequently, PBI International contracted with PBI Canada (our first country group) to administer the Central America Project after we had appointed Joleigh Commandant as Central America Project Director on George Willoughby's recommendation. Joleigh was part of the Movement for a New Society with George, and was based in Toronto.

In the first years, we simply used the PBI International nonprofit as the direct administrator of projects, until PBI Canada became the first incorporated country group. This was done largely for tax purposes. Because they were raising funds in Canada, they needed to have a Canadian corporation. Although PBI itself is incorporated in the U.S., after PBI-USA was founded, the International also contracted with PBI-USA to administer the Mexico Project (just as PBI Germany administers the Nepal Project today). So this has been an as-needed evolution from a single international corporation organized in the United States under the laws of the state of Washington to several affiliated country groups, and Projects, some of which are also incorporated, but all operate through recognition by the International and adhere to whatever common understandings are in place. You can read more of Dan Clark's reflections in a longer article on his website at danielclark.zoomshare.com/2, titled "Peace Brigades International—Roots and Early Years," which is excerpted from his book, "A Privileged Life: Memoirs of an Activist," available through Amazon.com and other online booksellers.



Liam Mahony, author of *Unarmed Bodyguards*, reflects on his first encounter with PBI and the formation of PBI-USA

I first ran across PBI in the field, in Guatemala, when I was on a trip there for other reasons in 1985 and I was very impressed. I later applied to join the PBI team in Guatemala, which I did in 1987. When I came back to the U.S. in 1988, I contacted the PBI International Office, then based in Philadelphia, and I began working on U.S.A.-based support together with a very energetic group of other volunteers recently-returned from Central America. Karen Beetle and Carolyn Mow, working from Albany, started managing volunteer trainings and the emergency response network around the same time, while I focused on grassroots fundraising, and organizing speaking tours from a tiny office in a church basement in Cambridge. Later, John Lindsay-Poland took over the role of U.S.-based grant-writing from the International Office as well. With the support of the staff at the International office, these and other volunteer efforts formed the basis of what eventually

became the PBI-USA country group. It was a bit ad hoc, with oversight from the International Office, which was overwhelmed with many tasks and glad to have the support. In 1990, after two years of our part-time staff work and the help of a whole lot of volunteers, we pulled together a national gathering outside of Boston, and we officially formed PBI-USA as an institution, named a board (its National Coordinating Committee), and approved new staff. The concept of "country groups" had been formalized in PBI's structure at its 1989 General Assembly in Trier, Germany, and several country groups were coming together in Europe in this same period. The function of country support groups was becoming more clear: that they raise money, that they find volunteers, that they do political support for the field. Although PBI-USA functioned legally under the auspices of the International Office until 1995, for all practical purposes it was an autonomous country group from 1990 on. Before 1990, a lot of volunteers were doing similar work through the international office. The late 1980s was a time of intensive interest in Central America and growth of PBI, and the founding of PBI-USA in 1990 reflected this energy and worked to capitalize on it by establishing a more permanent national structure.



Karen Beetle on how the work stayed with her, making her stay with the work

Non-violent movements for change have always captured my imagination. At age 17, I began organizing in the anti-nuclear power movement. Over the next years, my activism grew to encompass the resistance to draft registration, nuclear disarmament, nuclear facilities organizing, and opposition to U.S. involvement in Central America. For the most part, I organized non-violent campaigns that included direct action and civil disobedience. I was a proponent of decentralized, affinity group-based decision-making and non-violence training. What drew me to PBI's Central America Project was the opportunity to support a non-violent movement for change in Guatemala. At the time, PBI was accompanying leaders of Grupo de Apoyo Mutuo (GAM), a largely women-led organization that was speaking out powerfully and courageously in the wake of one of the most brutal military regimes in recent history that had disappeared more than 100,000 mostly indigenous Guatemalans (see photo above of a 1985 GAM march).

The fact that my U.S. Citizenship could offer protection to these courageous women was profoundly compelling. I corresponded with Aliane Hawkins from PBI's Central American Project (CAP) in Toronto and within weeks, I was escorting the women of GAM from PBI's house in Zona 11, Guatemala City. Every day afforded me new insight into and growing compassion for the complexity of international accompaniment and non-partisanship. I was struggling to improve my Spanish, to maneuver in the political reality, to participate on a team, and to learn from the people who had lived for years under repression and terror. There was nowhere else that I wanted to be.

Coming back to the U.S. after my work with PBI in Guatemala in 1986 was a challenge. The intensity of our work stayed with me and I joined and then co-coordinated PBI's Emergency Response Network – a network that generated telegrams and phone calls to back up our in-country accompaniment. I also contacted PBI's CAP office and began the work that would lead to my staffing a PBI office in Albany, NY in 1987 that was supported by the CAP Toronto office and coordinated training and outreach for PBI volunteers. We developed an orientation/training model with a weekend to learn about PBI's work followed by five days of training for potential volunteers. We began training volunteers for the Guatemala team but went on to include training for the El Salvador and Sri Lanka teams as well. Carolyn Mow, Liam Mahony and I had worked closely through the Syracuse Peace Council and nuclear facilities organizing in Upstate New York. Together we began designing and creating a base of support to launch PBI training and to develop the contacts that would lead to establishing PBI-USA two years later.

Carolyn, Liam and I were joined by John Lindsay-Poland, Elizabeth St. John, Barbara Scott, Mary Link (from PBI's International Office), Bob Siedle-Khan, Winnie Romeril, and others in creating the trainings, growing the ERN's political strength, fundraising, and running speaking tours to get out the word about PBI's model of accompaniment and the challenges faced by the non-violent movements we supported. Carolyn and I both returned to Central America to work on the El Salvador team. Liam and Carolyn led a PBI delegation in Guatemala and Chiapas. All of us went on speaking tours. Our first-hand experience as PBI volunteers and our capacity to convey the challenges faced by the people we accompanied were profound catalysts for PBI's growth in those early years. As activists and organizers, we were well situated and deeply motivated to bring these skills and capacities to the development of PBI in the U.S. Both former and returning PBI volunteers were similarly motivated and well situated to join us in spreading the word and keeping alive the voices of those who initially sought our accompaniment and who went on to win our hearts and minds.

As I reflect on this work thirty years later, I am deeply appreciative of the integrity, commitment and clarity of my PBI colleagues. I am grateful to have collaborated in such a meaningful way to live out our values and to support those whose lives were so unfairly shaped by political violence and repression. I'm also grateful that so many hands have continued to carry out this work and PBI is thriving today.



Winnie Romeril reflects on her introduction to PBI and time as a volunteer

In the summer of 1988, a one-page handwritten trifold on purple paper came across my internship desk at the Human Rights Office of the National Council of Churches in NYC. It announced the first ever North America PBI Orientation Weekend in Albany NY. I asked around the office to see if PBI was reputable. I was 21 years old, just returned from a year studying abroad in Colombia, and looking for a way to return to Latin America without taking a US government job. Seasoned human rights advocates said, "PBI? I don't remember hearing anything BAD about them, so that's a plus. Why don't you go check them out and tell us what you find?"

What I found that weekend changed the course of my life. I was captivated by these people who doggedly pursued a dual nonviolent and non-partisan strategy to safeguard civilian activists under threat.

Twenty-five or so curious people like me gathered for that first PBI Orientation Weekend at Albany's Quaker Meeting House.

I remember introductions happening in a big circle. The facilitators sat sprinkled throughout the circle. This struck me immediately as a different way of doing things: nonhierarchical, decentralized, egalitarian. We learned about PBI's work from former volunteers, such as Liam Mahony, Karen Beetle, Carolyn Mow and John Lindsay-Poland, who led us through vivid role-plays and participatory activities.

In one role-play, I got to be on the death squad. It was ridiculously easy to kidnap our target when no one was ready for it. Yet we were just amateurs with 5 minutes of prep! We changed roles and repeated the scenario. This time, as people on the look-out for a threat, we foiled the kidnapping attempt.

During the last session, Liam made an impassioned speech about becoming part of PBI and offered a colorful hand-woven Guatemalan purse for a \$75 donation, which would support the Emergency Response Network and help cover the costs of a volunteer protecting an activist. By this point, more than anything, I wanted to join PBI. What better way to show my new friends that I was serious about it? I wrote the check.

In the coming year, I attended meetings in the homes of PBI volunteers, set up a PBI speaker at my college campus, and attended a volunteer training in Quebec. I was accepted to join the team, but due to my young age, had to defer for a year. Meredith Larson and Rusa Jeremic, two of my friends from the training, joined the Guatemala Team just a few months after the team received death threats in May 1989 for accompanying Rigoberta Menchu, years before she won the Nobel Prize. In July, the PBI house and GAM offices were bombed; later that year, both Meredith and Rusa were knifed in a clear attempt to drive PBI out the country. PBI's work never felt so important. Our growing band of supporters in the U.S. lobbied Congress for support. As a result of many efforts- and because of continued requests from Guatemalan activists who still felt safer with PBI volunteers than without- the team remained in place with stronger political backing than before.

I joined the team 5 months after that last attack, staying for a year and a half. (*Winnie is pictured center in the photo above*) PBI had just changed their policy requiring all volunteers to serve at least 6 months (previously there had been hundreds of "short-term volunteers" for as little as 2 weeks). It was rare on the team for someone to have strong connections to a country group back home. So, I got nominated to liaise with Rachel Heckscher and Randy Divinski (PBI-USA staff) for production of the PBI Bulletin.

When I returned home, Randy organized a 6-week speaking tour, including over 60 talks and interviews. I always tell PBI volunteers that going on tour is good therapy - you get to talk nonstop to captive audiences about the amazing activists you accompanied. It assuages the guilt of having left the team. In every town, I stayed at the home of a PBI contact. They often drove me to the next city on my tour. And in keeping with tradition, at the end of every talk I would invite people to join PBI by making a donation in exchange for a pretty handmade gift from Guatemala.

Meredith Larson recalls a frightening experience with a happy ending during her time as a PBI volunteer

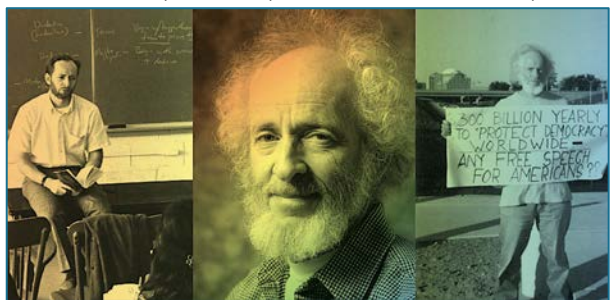
I first learned of PBI through Liam Mahony's fall 1988 speaking tour. I was already active on human rights issues, and a flyer for his tour piqued my interest. His event at the university was packed, but I was able to speak to him afterward and learned how to apply to a PBI team. I joined a small dinner two months later for Guatemala human rights leader Amílcar Méndez (pictured right), who was in Boston for a brief visit (and in small world moments, I met Liam again at the dinner). PBI in Guatemala was then accompanying Amílcar, as it did for many years, and Amílcar clearly conveyed how valuable PBI had been for him and his family. These two experiences solidified my interest in volunteering with PBI – I sent in my application. I was thrilled when I was accepted into a PBI training. I trained in Montreal in spring 1989 with some of the most amazing trainers I've ever had. The several-day experience was intense, and I learned so much. Soon thereafter, I learned I was approved to join a team, and I joined PBI in Guatemala that August, staying on the team until the end of December.



Years later, as I write this in fall 2016, I reflect yet again on some of the reasons why PBI has a place in so many hearts. I am still in touch with Amílcar Méndez, as I know are several of you – a testament to how PBI has played such a direct role in not only helping protect human rights and the lives of those who defend human rights, but also through its work, it has built an interconnected community of volunteers, staff, supporters, and the accompanied across so many countries.

Our interconnected community was also evident at a dinner I attended in Canada, ten years after I accompanied a young couple fleeing Guatemala. At the dinner, another young couple from Guatemala began relating a story about PBI after learning I was a former field volunteer. It turned out to be the same story I had lived ten years before – they were the cousins of the young man in the couple that fled, and they had a wonderful update for me – that all was well with their cousins.

And finally, a story some of you know (retold in part by Winnie above) - in late 1989, two Canadian colleagues and I were attacked by men lying in wait for us near the PBI Guatemala office. In extraordinary PBI fashion, multiple people across the U.S., and in other countries, immediately responded through the emergency response network; numerous government officials in several countries heard you responding, and a few months later, 111 Members of Congress in the U.S. Senate and House took action to express grave concern about the human rights situation in Guatemala, including the attacks on PBI. Thanks to the tremendous support from the broader PBI community, space was created for PBI to continue its important work in Guatemala. And thanks to all of you, as you have been a part of this community and helped PBI maintain its important work on behalf of human rights.



Dr. Joseph Morton (1935 – 2016)

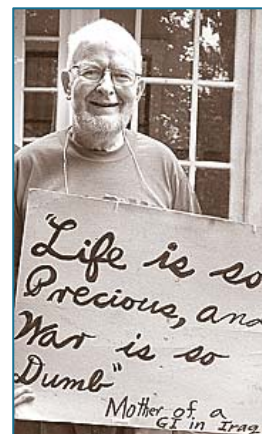
Live simply so that others can simply live

- Mahatma Gandhi

Beloved former NCC member and longtime PBI supporter, Joe Morton, passed away last year on April 7, 2016 after a battle with cancer. Joe was a gentle soul who lived as simply as he could so he could give back to those in need. For well over 10 years, Joe was a faithful donor to PBI-USA. After serving on the NCC (our board of directors), Joe recognized the significant need for PBI to receive increased financial support. In 2005, Joe made the decision to pledge \$100,000 to PBI-USA over 10 years. Each month, he sent a check for \$850, year after year, until his pledge was fulfilled and even afterwards. Because he made donations monthly rather than yearly, his gifts often accompanied a phone call to check in, lend his support, and offer encouraging words. Holidays were particularly key times that Joe would call, urging staff to stop working and take a break. Those calls will be forever missed. We send our condolences to the many family, friends, and students of our dear friend Joe. Joe was professor emeritus of philosophy and peace studies at Goucher College in Baltimore and founder of the Peace Studies Program. He is survived by his daughter Rebecca Morton of Columbus, OH, his son-in-law David Brewer and grandchildren Lotte and Lucian Brewer; his son Jason Morton of Hagerstown, MD, his daughter-in-law Kelly Ann and granddaughters Meredith and Sadie, his sister Veronika Kardosh of Israel and his nephew Michael Kardosh.

William H. Houston (1929 – 2015)

Longtime PBI supporter Bill Houston passed away from hypothermia while hiking alone in the Canadian Rockies on Aug. 17, 2015, a hobby he had enjoyed since the 70s. We knew Bill as an activist for peace and social justice and husband of former field volunteer, Hazel Tulecke. According to his obituary, his FBI file (obtained through a Freedom of Information Act request) reveals that they noted that he was given Conscientious Objector status by the Selective Service in 1956; also of his participation in fundraising and support for the Freedom Project in Mississippi in 1964; and of his activities with the Dayton Area Committee for Peace in Vietnam in 1965. Bill's dedication to peace and justice showed through his dedication to PBI, as he often made calls of support to our office. We miss hearing from our friend and send our condolences to his many loved ones. Bill is survived by his wife Hazel Tulecke, daughters Alice Houston and Judy Lucks (Jerry), step-daughters Kim Beyer, Heidi Eastman and Kari Tulecke, and eight grandchildren. Hazel is a former PBI Guatemala volunteer who served during the 80s.





Steve Molnar reflects on the early days of PBI-USA and the North American Project

I served as a short term volunteer on the Guatemala team in 1989. At that time, we did not have a formal country group in the U.S. There was a core group of return volunteers who recruited volunteers and recommended them to the project. Formal trainings didn't actually start until 1989. When I came back (from Guatemala), that's when I went to my first training. I remember there were about 30 people there and probably seven or eight of them were returning volunteers. Karen Beetle, Carolyn Mow, and Liam Mahony were actively recruiting people, particularly in the Northeast. At the time, the international office and International Secretariat were in Massachusetts, so there was some support there. But it wasn't the same as having a country group. PBI-USA was organized and formed sometime after that first training.

I helped to start the North American Project together with Alaine Hawkins from Canada, and other returned volunteers from the Guatemala Project (pictured left with Steve in purple). In 1990, there had been a lot of violence in a native community near

where I live, Akwesasne, a Mohawk reservation that straddles the border with Quebec, Ottawa, and upstate New York. There was a civil war in that community. The peace witness project that had formed there was a disaster. A group was trying to spearhead this effort, but they were partisan, and it wasn't an effective witness. A number of former PBI volunteers had passed through Akwesasne at this time. Out of that experience, four or five people who had gone there said it might be wise for Peace Brigades to start a North America Project to be prepared for similar situations. For the next year, we did a lot of planning and networking within PBI and with native communities.

The following spring, there was violence in other Mohawk communities in Canada. In one, provincial police opened fire on a Mohawk barricade. Soon after, there was a big standoff between the military and the provincial police with Mohawks on a bridge in Montreal that lasted for 60 days. We were still developing the project at that time and weren't ready to respond at that point. However at the one-year anniversary of that standoff, we had a request to go into two of the Mohawk communities, Kanehsatake and Kahnawake, and the North America Project (NAP) began. I was coordinator of the project for the first four years, and then I stepped out and others continued through the 90's. The project lived on just sheer energy of dedicated volunteers. Funding was very limited. We had gone to quite a number of places and had a lot of experiences. We spent a lot of time with Innu communities in Labrador and Quebec. We went out west to a number of communities in the US Southwest. There were probably about a dozen communities we worked with over about eight or nine years.

The project lived on the sheer energy of dedicated volunteers. Funding was very limited. We went to quite a number of places and had a lot of experiences. We spent a lot of time with Innu in Labrador and Quebec. We went out west to a number of communities in the U.S. Southwest. We worked with about a dozen indigenous communities over about eight or nine years.

It opened up our thinking of nonviolent intervention and differed from PBI's traditional model of working in other countries in the (global) South. Here we were working in communities where we had a country group (PBI-USA and PBI-Canada). There were things going on within our borders that were worthy of PBI's attention.

We were bringing our experience from other Projects and trying to use that in the North American context. There were a lot of things that we did in Guatemala that were quite applicable and then some things that were just totally new. In Guatemala, we might see massacres or open violence. We didn't see as much of that in North America, but we did witness a type of genocide, a cultural genocide. A lot of our work was spent recording that. Certainly there were some guns and bullets and some deaths, but just as easily, it might be suicide, alcohol abuse, or loss of language, land, or natural resources.

We explored creative strategies. PBI worked with indigenous people in El Salvador, for example, and we brought some of these people to meet indigenous people in North America to have exchanges, so they could share their struggles with one another. With some of the communities, like the Innu, they could be separated by 500 miles or more. Many of these communities are only accessible by a tiny two-seat plane. NAP presented what was going on in one community to another and it was news to them, even though they were Innu people in both places. The North America Project lasted nearly ten years throughout the entire 1990's. You can learn more about the project by visiting the archives at peacebrigades.org/archive/nap.



Jack Herbert and the Dented Coat by Jitman Basnet, Nepali Human Rights Defender exiled in the U.S.

On December 2, 2011, Peace Brigades International celebrated its 30th anniversary in Portland. I was invited to speak at the event. Daniel Clark, one of PBI's founding members, was also going to attend the program. It was a wonderful occasion for me to get a chance to meet a PBI founding member as well as PBI-USA National Coordinating Committee members, volunteers and supporters in one place. I, along with Katherine Hughes Fraitekh (Executive Director at that time), flew to Portland from New Mexico.

When we arrived to Portland, the Multnomah Friends Meetinghouse at SE Stark Street (pictured above) was full of local PBI supporters. Most people, including some of the PBI-USA National Coordinating Committee members, were new to me. During my 8-year relationship with Peace Brigades International, I met many PBI volunteers and supporters; but the Portland meeting was very memorable.

The outside temperature was freezing. Many participants left after the program, though a few were still there talking to each other. Some of them were cleaning the dishes and sweeping the floor. In the corner, I noticed a man standing with a huge backpack. A while later, he put his backpack on the floor and helped with cleaning dishes. At that point, I noticed - there was a big hole in his coat. To me, the word was dented.

When he finished cleaning the dishes, he came over to me and we introduced ourselves to each other. His name was Jack Herbert (pictured in the tan and brown sweater above, Jitman is the speaker in the photo). I asked him about the hole in his coat. He said, 'the coat was burnt by electricity.' I asked him how he learned about PBI. He responded that while visiting Latin American countries as a tourist, he saw PBI volunteers in a rural village protecting civilians from a brutal war. That was the first time that he learned of PBI. He was so impressed with the work PBI was doing at that time that he came back to United States and contacted PBI staff.

It gives me hope for the future to see his value of life, principles for change, and motivation to accomplish peace. A minor thing can change our mindset forever. We cry, smile, laugh, and show anger many times in life. Positive feelings are always a source of energy.

On the way back to the hotel, Katherine and I talked more about him. What a dedication! He could have bought several coats with the money he donates to PBI. But, buying a new coat was not so important for him. He cared for others more than himself. I don't know how many years he wore the same coat with the hole but throughout all these years, he has continued to donate to PBI.

When we came back to Albuquerque, I wrote an email to Jack Herbert thanking him for his generous support. Jack was my inspiration. He stayed on my mind. He was one of the donors of PBI that not only protected my life, but has also helped save many civilians around the world.



making space for peace

Peace Brigades International-USA
P.O. Box 75880
Washington, DC 20013



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PBI does not accept any funding that would compromise our credibility, our non-partisanship, our independence, nor our commitment to non-interference. Therefore, individual donations are very important to ensuring we are able to stand alongside threatened human rights defenders.

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Send us a donation by check or credit card via the envelope included in this booklet. Thanks in advance for your support!

Your gift is a critical part of our work to support threatened human rights defenders and help create space for peace.

Together, we can provide life-giving support to
human rights defenders and communities whose lives and work are threatened by violence.

Front and Back Cover Art from PBI Colombia's 2016 Video "What Does PBI Colombia Do?"